

Appln. No.: 09/693,285
Response Dated March 17, 2005
Reply to Office Action dated November 17, 2004

Remarks/Arguments

Claims 16-36 are pending in this application. Reconsideration and allowance of all of the claims present in the application are respectfully requested in light of the following remarks.

In response to the Final Rejection mailed November 17, 2004, Applicant filed a Notice of Appeal on February 2, 2005. This Response After Final Rejection is being filed following an interview by the undersigned with the Examiner, which occurred after a telephone conversation between the undersigned and the Examiner's supervisor James Trammell, both of which occurred after the Notice of Appeal was filed. The undersigned initiated the call to Mr. Trammell because of the protracted prosecution of the instant application. After the first two Office Actions (a Non-Final Rejection mailed February 3, 2003, and a Final Rejection mailed August 1, 2003) and two responses thereto, Applicant filed an Appeal Brief in March 5, 2004. The Examiner reopened prosecution in view of the Appeal Brief with a third Office Action (Non-Final Rejection mailed May 12, 2004) citing two new references.

In the Appeal Brief, Applicant provided specific elements that were not taught or suggested by the originally cited references. The Examiner reopened prosecution and rejected all the claims based on two new references that again did not teach or suggest the very elements that Applicant in the Appeal Brief distinguished over the art of Record at that time. Because the Examiner was away from the office, an interview between the Examiner and the undersigned could not be conducted before a response to the third office action was due. In the response to the third Office Action, the undersigned requested that, after considering the following remarks, if the Examiner did not find that the claims were in condition for allowance, the Examiner call the undersigned to discuss this matter before issuing another Final Rejection which would cause Applicant to go to appeal again. The Examiner mailed the current Final Rejection (fourth Office Action) without conducting the requested interview. This fourth

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Office Action sets forth the same rejections as in the third Office Action and the Examiner again failed to address the differences between the art of record as set forth in Applicant's specific, detailed arguments that are repeated below. Such action by the Examiner forced the Applicant to file a second Notice of Appeal in the prosecution of this case.

Based on the aforementioned conversation with Mr. Trammell and the interview with the Examiner, the undersigned understands that a Notice of Allowance will follow the filing of this response.

Claim Rejections under 35 USC §102(e)

Claims 16-22 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(e) as being anticipated by Sansone (U.S. 5,726,894). For the reasons set forth below, this rejection is respectfully traversed. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Before addressing the merits of the rejections of claims 16-22, Applicant wishes to clarify that Sansone '894 is not a 102(e) reference. Sansone '894 issued in 1998, more than a year prior to the date that the instant application was filed. Notwithstanding this fact, Sansone '894 does not anticipate the present invention regardless of the 102 section that may be considered.

With regard to the rejections, again it appears that the Examiner does not understand the present invention. In the rejection of claim 16, the Examiner does not discuss, nor does Sansone '894 disclose the following elements of claim 16:

a first database of mailer electronic addresses indexed by mailer identification codes;

means for creating at a first postal authority a mail item file corresponding to the mailpiece; said mail item file including said mailer identification code and said value-added service request;

means for communicating said performance of said value-added service to said first postal authority using said first postal authority address, wherein said first

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postal authority determines a mailer electronic address using a mailer identification code associated with the mailpiece and communicates performance of said value-added service to the mailer using the mailer electronic address.

Furthermore, as set forth above with regard to the 102(b) rejection, Sansone '894 does not teach or suggest the system that provides for a distribution of a mailpiece by a plurality of postal authorities, wherein value-added services data associated with a mailpiece includes addressing information for a return receipt from an intended mailpiece recipient for services performed by a final handling postal authority, but confirmation is communicated by a first postal authority to the original mailer because the identity of the mailer is disclosed only to the first postal authority and not to subsequent handling postal authorities. Thus, Sansone '894 does not disclose, teach or suggest the limitations of claim 16.

As support for his rejections, the Examiner restates claim 16 and refers to col. 5, line 25 to col. 6, line 65 in Sansone '894. This section of Sansone '894 is a description of Fig. 1 of Sansone '894 which is a schematic view of a postage metering system according to Sansone '894, including separate printing and accounting apparatus. The description explains how the random access memory is structured and information is stored therein. See col. 5, lines 28-36

The alphanumeric and graphic information stored for display and selection purposes preferably corresponds to a plurality of selectable postal processing services 40 for a sheet 17, including the services 40A-40K as hereinafter discussed, each of which includes a different one of a plurality of predetermined service values 42 assigned thereto, including the values 42A-42K, one or more of which may be a zero value.

The rest of the cited description refers to various specific postal services that can be stored in the memory. There is no description or suggestion in Sansone '894 how value added services would be processed by a plurality of postal authorities as claimed in claim 16.

Based on the foregoing, Sansone ('894) neither discloses nor suggests the present invention. For at least the above reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that

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claim 16 is allowable over Sansone et al ('894). Claims 17-22, which are dependent upon claim 16, are allowable on their own merits.

Claims 23-36 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(e) as being anticipated by Sansone (U.S. 6,549,892). For the reasons set forth below, this rejection is respectfully traversed. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Sansone '892 does not teach or suggest the following as set forth in claim 23. A method for providing value-added services requested by a mailer and relating to the **handling of a mailpiece by a plurality of postal authorities** wherein the **final handling post**: receives a mail item, **scans the mail item to obtain a digital image of the mail item and an identifier for an initial handling post, transmits merged digital images** of recipients signature and the mail item **to the initial handling post**. Neither does Sansone '892 teach or suggest the following as set forth in claim 30. A method for providing value-added services requested by a mailer and relating to the **handling of a mailpiece by a plurality of postal authorities** wherein an **initial handling post**: receives electronically a transfer file representing confirmation of delivery of a mail item by a final handling post, **parses the transfer file to retrieve digital images of the mail item and a signature of a recipient confirming delivery of the mail item, and sends to the mailer confirmation of delivery of the mail item**. To the contrary, Sansone '892 does not address the handling of a mailpiece by a plurality of postal authorities.

Sansone ('892) is directed to a method that enables the post to deliver letters, flats, post cards and packages (mail) addressed to a recipient name and unique code to be delivered directly to the recipient. Mail addressed to a name and a unique code would be captured by the post during the posts sortation process and rerouted to the delivery address of the unique code. In support of the rejection of claims 23 and 30, the Examiner refers to Figs. 6 and 7; col. 2, lines 20-33; col. 4, lines 20-36 and col. 8, line 22 through col. 9, line 9.

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Figs. 6 and 7 show respectively a flow chart showing a request by the post for a postal address for a unique code and a flow chart showing a request by a mail recipient requesting a routing change for their unique code. Col. 2, lines 20-33 provide a summary of the invention disclosed in Sansone ('892).

The invention accomplishes the foregoing by: assigning a unique code to each recipient that specifically identifies the recipient, i.e., social security number, tax identification number, etc.; relating recipients code with recipients name and delivery address; relating recipients address changes with recipients name and unique code; permitting individuals or entities to add recipients unique code to the recipient mailing address; reading information on mail to capture the unique code when present, determining recipient's delivery address from recipients code and recipient's name.

Col. 4, lines 20-36, describes how mail is processed using scanners and sorters.

Mail that is able to be scanned and sorted by sorter 24 is sent to a delivery bar code sorter/code printer 25 or a carrier sequence bar code sorter/code printer 26. Sorters 25 and 26 sort the mail in the order that the mail is going to be delivered by postal carrier 27. Mail that canceller 22 determines is not optical character readable is sent to bar code sorter/code printer 28. Mail that canceller 22 obtains electronic images from and mail that reader 23 obtains electronic images from transfers the electronic images to remote bar code system 32. Bar code system 32 matches the look up zip code for the mail pieces from canceller 22 and merges them. System 32 electronically transmits the bar code information to sorter 28 where the bar code information is sprayed on the mail pieces. Mail that is able to be scanned and sorted by sorters 24 and 28 is sent to a delivery bar code sorter 25. Sorters 25 and 26 sort the mail in the order that the mail is going to be delivered by postal carrier 27.

Col. 8, line 22 through col. 9, line 9, describes how the invention of Sansone ('892) may be used in a corporate mail department. Sansone ('892) does not disclose or suggest the handling of a mailpiece by a plurality of postal authorities or the present invention.

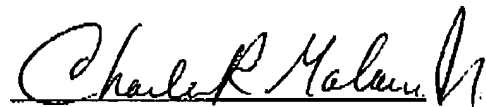
Based on the foregoing, Sansone ('892) is not a proper 35 USC §102(e) reference and, furthermore, neither discloses nor suggests the present invention. For at least the above reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 23 and 30 are allowable over Sansone et al ('892). Claims 24-29 and 31-36, which are dependent upon claims 23 and 30 respectively, are allowable on their own merits.

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Applicant does not understand the Examiner's remarks in the Response to Arguments section of the latest Office Action. As discussed with Mr. Trammell and the Examiner, the Examiner's response does not address the specific, detailed differences in the prior art of record from the instant invention as claimed.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the claims of this application are now in a condition for allowance and favorable action thereon is requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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